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# Bill Provides \$87 Million For Language Education

By Charles R. Babcock  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Bucking the budget-austerity tide, a House education subcommittee has unanimously reported out a bill to create a new \$87 million-a-year federal program to encourage the teaching of foreign languages in schools and colleges.

Rep. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), chairman of the post-secondary education subcommittee, said he believes the program is necessary to aid the defense and intelligence communities and the United States' position in international trade after years of declining enrollment in language programs.

"Where there is a national need, we have to meet it," he said in an interview from his district office.

Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell has been a supporter of efforts to strengthen the foreign-language capabilities of students. But, in a letter to the subcommittee, he said the administration opposes the bill because of "budgetary constraints" and philosophical disagreement about creating new categorical programs in an age of block grants.

The bill would provide \$10 million to states for model foreign-language programs in local school districts, \$4 million for such programs in junior and community colleges, \$13 million for universities to encourage increased enrollment and \$60 million for colleges with foreign-language requirements for admission and graduation.

Colleges, for instance, would receive \$30 for each student enrolled in first- and second-year language

courses after the school's language registrations amounted to 5 percent of the total enrollment. The school would receive \$40 for each student enrolled in more advanced classes.

The same \$30-a-head system also would apply to colleges requiring two years of high school language for admission and a two-year college proficiency for graduation.

During hearings in July, the subcommittee heard witnesses bemoan the nation's foreign-language record. Adm. Bobby R. Inman, deputy director of the CIA, said the nation's "rapidly deteriorating" foreign-language capability was having "an adverse impact" on intelligence.

"We are especially vulnerable when it comes to the more exotic languages, such as Urdu, Arabic and Farsi," Inman testified.

Simon has written a book about the problem—"The Tongue-Tied American"—and admits he is among those deficient in foreign languages. He said that the United States is the only nation that does not require some foreign language for college graduation, and that fewer than 1 percent of the nation's 12 million college students are studying languages spoken by three-quarters of the world's population.

Simon acknowledged that he hopes to win support for the bill by focusing on its potential to aid national security.

In his letter of opposition, Bell said he thought it unrealistic to expect the bill to offer enough incentives to colleges to have a significant impact on the nation's foreign-language problem.